

ACCESSIBILITY IN HISTORICAL CITY CENTER - NEW WAYS TO THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF VIBORG

Jury Report of the Second Round

The design contest “Accessibility in Historical City Centres – New Ways to the Cultural Heritage of Viborg” was launched in the summer of 2011 as a project competition for prequalified teams.

The competition is backed by the municipality of Viborg in partnership with Realdania, the Bevica Foundation, the Labour Market Holiday Fund and the Danish Disability Foundation. The goal was to obtain creative, innovative suggestions for how to make Viborg’s historical city centre more accessible to everyone.

In November 2011 the competition was concluded and two finalists were chosen to participate in procurement by direct negotiation. The finalists were:

SLA

Public Architects
2+1 Ideas Agency

Schønherr

Creo Architects
Peter Søndergaard, Trafikrevision
Professor Martin Zerlang, University of Copenhagen

The second round was concluded in April of 2012; the winning proposal was submitted

and headed up by Schønherr A/S, who is expected to be the coordinating contractor.

About the competition

The competition consisted of two phases:

- A project contest in which five prequalified teams submitted their proposals, whereupon two teams were chosen to continue to procurement by direct negotiation.
- In the second round the finalists have developed their proposals further based on the Jury Report for the contest round.

Generally speaking, both final proposals take a clear stance on creating better accessibility in a city with a rich built heritage, but have met the challenge in different ways.

The Schønherr team was chosen as winner of the second and final round because the jury finds that this proposal has stayed most closely with its original idea. The team has remained true to their fundamental goal of establishing accessibility discreetly. At the same time, the proposal presents the most carefully thought-out solutions to improving accessibility with respect to the historical surroundings in the city centre of Viborg. Finally, the physical solutions – e.g., good detailed

examples of adapting the terrain – have the potential for great demonstrational value.

Judgment criteria

The jury’s task was to choose the proposal which increased equal accessibility for everyone as greatly as possible within the established financial framework, while respecting and interacting with the preservation values of the city centre. Moreover, the jury was to assess whether the proposals could work on a practical level and add more value to the city.

The contestants were required – if they wished to work with buildings – to tailor their proposals to buildings that are already open to the public. Additionally the proposals were to create the greatest possible accessibility given the available resources, and factor in existing knowledge about the archaeological conditions of the city centre. Last but not least, they were required to account for the ways in which users, accessibility experts, authorities and tourism operators were to be involved in the project.

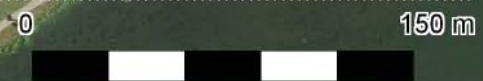
The jury evaluated the two proposals based on guiding criteria of:

- Architectural and urban planning quality
- Process description
- Finances and remuneration



SCT. MOGENS GADE
LL. SCT. HANS GADE
ST. SCT. HANS GADE
GRÅBRØDRE KLOSTER
Vestre Landsret
STÆNDER PLADSEN
GL. RÅDHUS
KONGE-HYLDNINGS-PLADSEN
AMTMANDS-KARRÉEN
NYTORV
DOMKIRKEPLADSEN
SKOVGÅRDS-MUSEET
LATINER-HAVEN
SCT. MATHIAS GADE
HJULTORVET
ST. SCT. NIKKELS GADE
SORTEBRØDRE KIRKE
ST. SCT. PEDER STRÆDE

Tegnforklaring
Konkurrenceområde



GENERAL REMARKS OF THE JURY

The jury panel emphasizes that accessibility for everyone must be a parameter of success for both citizens and decision makers. For developers and decision makers functionality and aesthetic parameters are in play, in addition to maintenance and sustainability. Many questions must be answered: does the solution work in relation to many different types of usage? Is accessibility consistent with other initiatives in the city? Are the placement of guidelines and the choice of materials coherent? What is the durability and sustainability of the materials chosen? Can a map of the city be seen from a wheelchair? Can visitors plan their visit from home?

The goal of the contest is to make the historical city centre of Viborg accessible to everyone. This approach to accessibility and cultural heritage is new and strong and challenges myths and prejudices about accessibility as synonymous with accessibility for wheelchair users and blind persons; that accessibility initiatives mar the cultural heritage and cannot be beautifully executed; and that persons with disabilities never come here anyway, so why do anything? The proposals from both rounds demonstrate that much can be accomplished with an open and curious approach to the field.

Totality and concept

The two winners of the first round demonstrated very different approaches to rendering the historical environs more accessible, both in terms of suggestions for communication and in the concrete configuration of physical solutions. Both teams were critiqued, however, for an imbalance between physical solutions and communications initiatives, and were urged to nuance their general concepts and describe their concrete suggestions in greater detail.

In the first round, the proposal from the SLA team was richly illustrated in terms of ideas, taking its point of departure in a systematic analysis of the city, which served as a foundation for both a physical and a digitally based concept. In the second round, the team has designated Kongehyldningspladsen – the Square of Royal Acclamation – as the central point in the historical city centre, in line with their original main idea. The idea is implemented through a cultural wedge, a physical and experiential section cut into the terrain. The configuration of the wedge is described in the second round as composed of contemporary materials and techniques, so that it is set apart from its historical surroundings.

The proposal from the Schønherr team took its point of departure in the first round in a literary approach to Viborg's history and cultural heritage. Communication appeared diffuse, but the project offered a very detailed and convincing example of the adaptation of one of the city centre's small streets – Nytorvgade – which connects two central squares, Nytorv and the Cathedral Square. Also in the second round the team proposed a deliberately underplayed approach to the task, in which "it must not be apparent that we've been here". The project tailors itself to the historical city space and only innovates in places which can profit from being upgraded to better city space, streets, access situations or architectural totality.

Both proposals create physical accessibility through solutions that focus strongly on guidelines and traversing differences in levels through levelling, landings, etc.

City centre coherence

The two proposals address the desire to unite Viborg's commercial and historical cities accessibility-wise based on the same principles: smooth paving, simple levelling and guidelines create a coherent city, linking in designated neighbourhoods and street spaces.

The Schønherr team uses borderstones as their chosen marker for the coherent city, whereas team SLA draws on cast-iron guidelines and markers embedded in the pavement. Both proposals draw on the traffic plan for Viborg municipality, designed to reduce traffic in the historical city centre.

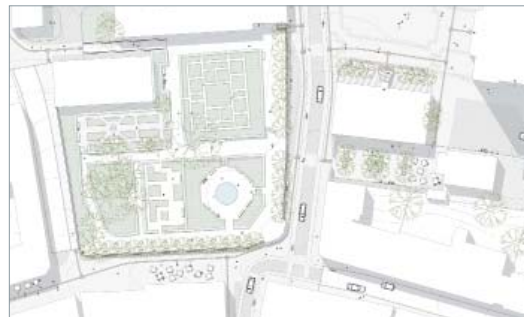
Communication

The jury finds that communication is generally restricted to rather well-known solutions focusing primarily on digitalisation. Both teams have focused on enabling citizens and visitors to prepare their visits around the city from home. The jury views this aspect positively, since the possibility for planning is important to creating an experience of accessibility in the city. However, neither of the proposals addresses the request for innovative combinations of communication and physical initiatives.

Thus the jury considers that neither team has solved the task of marrying physical initiatives with communications in a satisfactory way. The two rounds of the competition have made it clear that improving accessibility through communication demands a high level of integration with existing communications solutions – both locally and internationally –

and this challenge must be addressed in the further development of the winning project.

The SLA team has chosen the city map as its focal point for digital information, which the jury recognizes as a good – although not innovative – basic idea. The Schønherr team suggests developing an application for smartphones, targeted to blind persons and the visually impaired. Since it was not the goal of the competition to develop facilities for special users, but accessible solutions for everyone, the jury considers this approach to be unsuitable.



Team SLA, 2. round - Latinerhaven and Sct. Mathias Gade



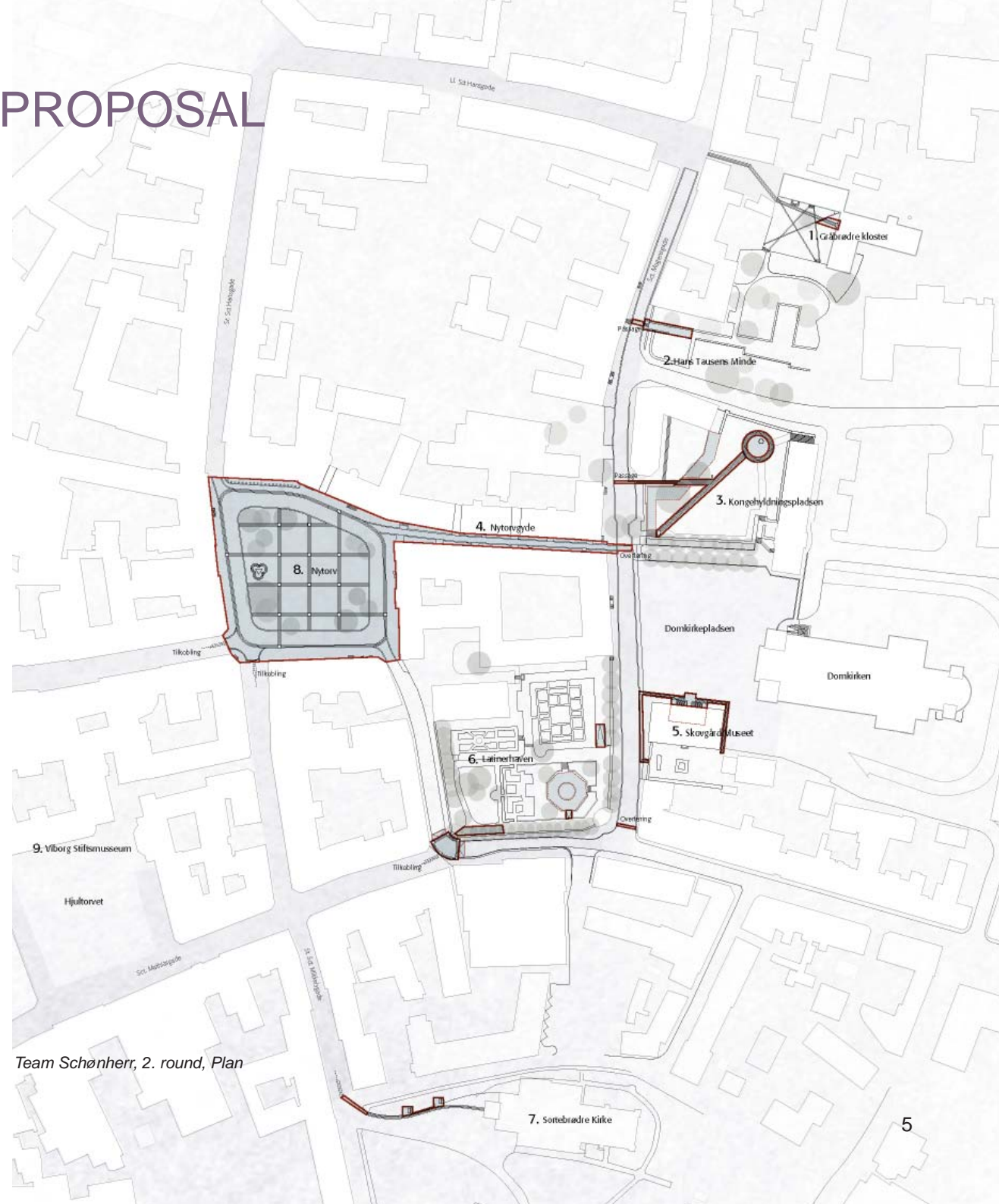
Team Schønherr, 2. round - Latinerhaven now and in the future

CHOOSING THE WINNING PROPOSAL

Each proposal clearly conveys – in its own way – an approach to creating increased accessibility in a city with a rich built heritage culture. The jury is of the opinion, however, that Schønherr has followed more closely the original idea and concept of establishing accessibility discreetly. Altogether the proposal comes across as more carefully worked out in relation to improving accessibility in the city centre with great respect for history. The physical solutions are good, detailed examples of terrain adaptations of great demonstration value.

In terms of finances, the jury also assesses that the Schønherr team has come up with the most favourable proposal, since it demonstrates clearly which initiatives can expect to be realized within the total sum available, and how the solutions contribute to improving physical accessibility.

In the first round, the proposal from team SLA attracted the jury's attention with a marked and innovative approach to the challenge, but the team lost ground in the second round, where the original, bold configuration of the culture wedge was not retained. The jury also lacked drawings and descriptions of several important features, such as urban fittings and furniture.



Team Schønherr, 2. round, Plan

THE JURY'S REMARKS TO THE WINNING PROPOSAL

The winning proposal works with 'accessibility for everyone' in a concrete, direct and pragmatic manner, without ostentation. It seeks primarily to improve accessibility through fine-tuning and adjustment of the existing terrain adaptations of squares, streets and paths. Equal access is 'invisibly' incorporated in the urban environment and the jury believes that the initiatives fit nicely and respectfully into the historical milieu.

The proposal focuses on the renovation of pavement and regulation of the traffic on the square, Nytorv and the nearby street, Nytorvgyde; initiatives which can significantly improve the city spaces as a framework for city life, and strengthen the coherence between the commercial streets and the Latin quarter.

The concept for the meeting with and navigation of the city is described as a city route, and the proposal links together the most important streets, park spaces and squares into a coherent progression without dead ends. However, this approach does assume that everyone is equally able to choose starting and end points and plan their trip around town.

The jury also finds that the idea of 'natural' guidelines is good and that the solutions generally appear convincing, both functionally and aesthetically. At the same time the pro-

posal illustrates concretely how much can be accomplished in terms of accessibility through small adjustments such as pavement changes, levelling steps, etc.; approaches which will be useful many other places, both in Denmark and internationally.

Physical initiatives

The physical initiatives from the Schønherr team include i.a., pavement, tree planting and a tailor-made solution to the entrance to the art museum, Skovgaard Museum.

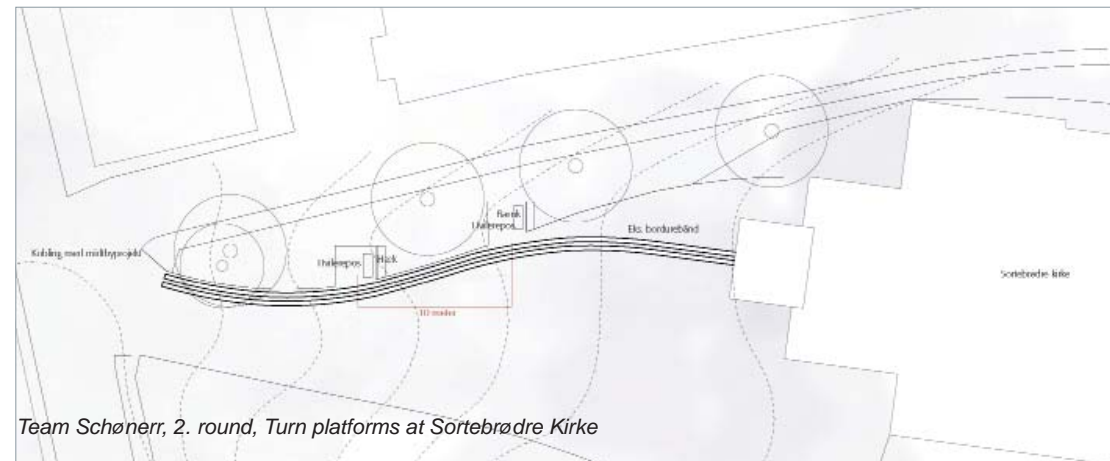
Specifically the proposal comprises:

- Renovating the pavement and tree planting to support everyday city life.
- Renovating and making accessible Ny-

torv and Nytorvgyde, based on an existing renewal of the city's walking street. The jury emphasizes, however, that the new initiative must accord with the historical city milieu and live up to current requirements and guidelines.

- Structuring the city space through new pavement on Nytorv, in relation to e.g., market activities, bicycle parking and common spaces. The proposal must be reworked so the guidelines follow the natural walkways across the square.

In addition to working with the city space, the Schønherr team has designed a tailor-made entrance to the art museum, Skovgaard Museum, from the Cathedral Square. The



Team Schønherr, 2. round, Turn platforms at Sortebrødre Kirke

team suggests that the terrain of the square be lowered around the entrance to create graded access to the basement level of the building (given that a new stairway solution can be created for the high main entrance). In principle the jury finds that this idea links architectural improvements with the solution of a common accessibility challenge, but also that the effect of lowering the terrain at the suggested location will be too drastic.

Communication

According to the jury, the digital communication solutions proposed by the Schønher team focuses too narrowly on the blind and the visually impaired, and thus functions to exclude instead of include. Digital solutions must benefit everyone, emphasizes the jury. Moreover, the proposal does not indicate the potential for interaction with the physical initiatives. Finally, the jury finds that the project is not ambitious enough in terms of user involvement and knowledge sharing.

Finances

The financial overview of the proposal is considered to be realistic and the operating budget for the city centre remains largely unchanged. The remuneration for consulting in connection with planning and execution is at approximately 15 per cent, which is on a par with the standard.



Team Schønher, 2. round, Siteplan Nytorv